



Congressman Henry A. Waxman

Keeping in Touch

August 2000

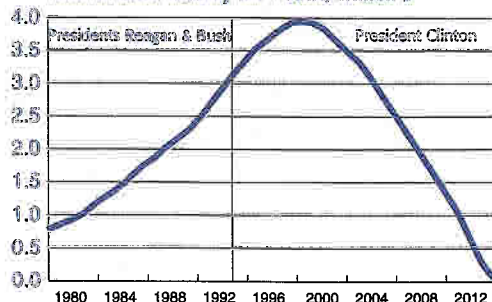
"We begin the new century with over 20 million new jobs; the fastest economic growth in more than 30 years; the lowest unemployment rates in 30 years; the lowest poverty rates in 20 years; the lowest African American and Hispanic unemployment rates on record; the first back-to-back budget surpluses in 42 years. And next month, America will achieve the longest period of economic growth in our entire history."

The Presidential State of the
Union Address
January 27, 2000

Federal Debt is Eliminated by 2012 in the President's Budget

1998-2000 — More than \$320 billion has already been paid off

Federal Debt held by the Public, Trillion \$



Source: Office of Management and Budget, Mid-Session Review of the Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2001

Dear Friends:

For much of our country these are the "good old days."

In 1993, our nation was plagued with a record high annual budget deficit of \$290 billion. Even worse, our public debt had grown from \$712 billion to \$3 trillion just between the years of 1980 and 1992.

Then, during President Clinton's first year in office in 1993, the Democratic Congress passed his first economic plan by a strictly party-line vote. At that time, Congressional Republicans warned that it would lead to serious inflation, job losses, and a deep recession. It was called a "disastrous scheme" and "a ship of folly," that would cause the country to "go to hell in a hand basket." Instead, we have experienced an unprecedented economic record over the last seven years, and the latest budget numbers indicate the federal budget surplus will reach \$230 billion in 2001.

We've made progress in other areas as well. When the landmark 1990 Clean Air Act passed, some questioned whether it would effectively clean the air, and others suggested it would bring a recession. Today, the air all around our country -- and especially in Los Angeles -- is much cleaner, and clean-up costs are only a fraction of what the industries direly predicted we would have to pay.

Of course, we continue to face formidable challenges. A record number of young children are beginning to smoke cigarettes. Prices for essential prescription medicines are out of reach for too many senior citizens. Some nursing homes are operating with disgraceful records. And, in Los Angeles and other cities, toxic air pollutants still frequently register at dangerous levels.

I'm continuing to focus on these important issues and hope you will take a moment to review the enclosed information on a number of investigations and proposals I am working on. As always, I would welcome your thoughts on these and other issues that concern you.

Sincerely

Henry A. Waxman
Henry A. Waxman



ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE

DEFENSE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

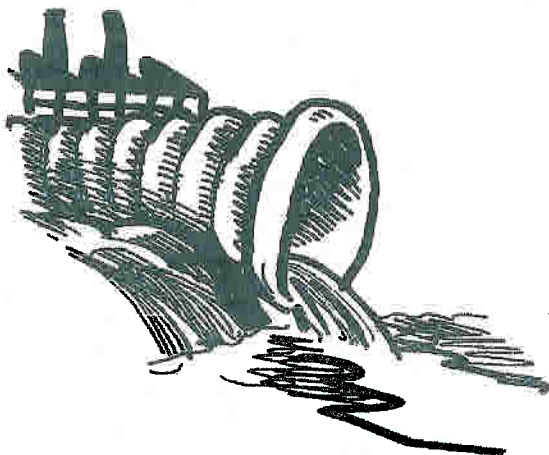
For years I've led efforts in Congress to toughen laws that set standards for air pollution, drinking water, and pesticides in foods.

Unfortunately, in the last few years, our biggest environmental fights haven't been to strengthen our laws, but to keep special interests from repealing safety standards already in place.

Those proposals would never enjoy public support, so they are secretly slipped into unrelated bills as "riders," frequently in the middle of the night during a busy time in the congressional session. For example, one rider has increased clearcutting in our national forests.

That's why I've introduced the Defense of the Environment Act (H.R. 525). This legislation would make sure that before our environmental and health laws could be rolled back, Congress would at least have an opportunity to debate and vote on weakening proposals. It's a commonsense measure that would put an end to most of the attempts to eliminate important fundamental environmental laws that enjoy the support of the American people.

Although H.R. 525 is supported by over 200 House Members, the Republican Leadership has refused to hold hearings on this bill or bring it to the floor for consideration.



WHAT TO DO ABOUT MTBE IN OUR DRINKING WATER

Drinking water in cities across our nation is being contaminated by methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE). California's cities have also been affected, and the City of Santa Monica has our country's most serious contamination problem.

For a number of years, the oil industry has been adding MTBE to its mixture of cleaner burning "reformulated" gasoline. While the reformulated gas program has been successful in reducing toxic and smog-forming air pollution, the underground storage tanks of many gas stations are leaking gasoline and MTBE into groundwater. MTBE has a powerful taste and odor similar to turpentine, and it migrates to groundwater quickly and renders it undrinkable.

I am working on a three-part solution to this problem.

First, it is essential that federal funding be provided for groundwater clean-up in Santa Monica and other areas with MTBE contamination. I'm pleased to report that President Clinton recently agreed to my request for over \$1 million to restore Santa Monica's fresh water aquifers.

Second, the oil industry must be held accountable for the harm its leaking tanks have caused.

And, third, federal legislation is needed to ensure that the phase-out of MTBE won't permit the oil companies to return to the use of dirty gasoline.



GLOBAL WARMING

The greatest environmental problem we currently face is global climate change. Global warming is caused by a dramatic increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases -- such as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide -- that trap the planet's heat. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, the 1990s have been the warmest years in six centuries.

That's why I've introduced the Clean Smokestacks Act (H.R. 2900), which would require dramatic cuts in power plant emissions of the four major power plant pollutants. H.R. 2900 would also require every power plant to meet the most recent pollution control standards for new pollution sources. This would dramatically reduce air pollution and recognize our nation's responsibilities under the Kyoto Protocol.

HEALTH CARE

THE STATE OF NURSING HOME CARE

Thirteen years ago, I authored the federal Nursing Home Reform Act, which established minimum standards for the care of our most vulnerable elderly and disabled citizens. At that time, conditions in many nursing homes around the country were scandalous. The law was designed to ensure that seniors and the disabled in nursing homes could live out their lives with dignity. It required nursing home residents to be properly cleaned and fed, to receive appropriate medical care, and to be free of improper physical and chemical restraints.

I recently investigated nursing homes in Los Angeles to determine whether they are complying with these legal requirements. Fortunately, there has been progress in some areas. The improper use of straps and drugs to subdue seniors, for example, had diminished since enactment of the law.

It is important to note that many homes do a good job. But the investigation showed that more needs to be done to protect our area's 30,000 nursing home residents. Unfortunately, in recent inspec-

tions, state inspectors found that some homes cause actual harm to their residents.

For example, inspectors observed that a blind ninety-two-year-old resident had difficulty finding food on her food tray and that nurse aides did not assist her before taking her food tray away. This resident had experienced a substantial weight loss in nine months. In another example, on several occasions inspectors observed a resident "crying and grimacing" in pain. Although her physician had ordered her to be monitored and to be given medication to ease her pain, the inspectors found that no pain medication had been administered to her during the previous two months.

This situation is simply intolerable. I've introduced legislation that would ensure that homes providing poor services are penalized and that adequate resources are given to nursing homes providing quality care.



ENDING PRICE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SENIORS AND PROVIDING AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

One of the biggest burdens many of our seniors face is the high cost of prescription drugs. Seniors have the greatest need for prescription drugs and account for one-third of all prescription drug sales, yet they often live on fixed incomes. Since prescription drug benefits are not part of Medicare, many seniors are forced to choose between paying for drugs and food or rent.

A study my staff conducted in our Congressional District showed that drug manufacturers engage in widespread price discrimination. Seniors without prescription drug coverage must pay far more for prescription drugs than favored customers, such as large HMOs and the federal government.

According to the study, the average price differential for the five drugs investigated was 166%.

In dollar terms, seniors must pay \$73 to \$131 more per prescription for these five drugs than favored customers do. This is due primarily to manufacturer price discrimination, not drug store markups.

Intolerable Price Discrimination					
Prescription Drug	Use	Prices For Favored Customers	Retail Prices For Uninsured Seniors	Differential For Senior Citizens	
				%	\$
Zocor	Cholesterol	\$27.00	\$118.50	339%	\$91.50
Norvasc	High Blood Pressure	\$59.71	\$136.02	128%	\$76.31
Prilosec	Ulcers	\$59.10	\$132.79	125%	\$73.69
Procardia XL	Heart Problems	\$68.35	\$152.82	124%	\$84.47
Zoloft	Depression	\$115.70	\$247.05	114%	\$131.35
Average Price Differential				166%	

Average retail prices in the 29th Congressional District for the five best-selling drugs for older Americans are more than twice as high as the prices that drug companies charge their most favored customers.

To protect seniors from this intolerable price discrimination, I have sponsored H.R. 644, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act. This legislation would use the free market to give Medicare beneficiaries the same advantages that HMOs and the federal government already receive.

Older Americans should never be forced to choose between buying food or medicine. Our goal should be to expand

Medicare to cover prescription drugs and I have cosponsored legislation (H.R. 1495) to do this. Until we are able to get this legislation through Congress, however, we should take the intermediate step of passing H.R. 644.



Congressman Waxman received the Society for Women's Health Research award for his work in Congress. (L to R) Reps. Waxman, Morella, DeLauro, Lowey, and Slaughter. Society Exec. Dir. Phyllis Greenberger at far right.



HOW PRIVATE IS YOUR PRIVATE INFORMATION?

According to studies, most online households believe companies don't keep personal information about them confidential – even when they promise to.

We cherish our privacy and have a special interest in protecting our personal health information. This year, I released a report, based on a survey my staff conducted, of large U.S. companies to determine whether they have adopted privacy policies that comply with recommendations of the Department of Health and Human Services and privacy experts.

The survey revealed that only 29% of the companies we looked into have written policies that prohibit the use or disclosure of employee health information without employee authorization; only 13% have written policies that establish penalties for privacy violations; and only 8% have written poli-

cies with any kind of requirement to limit use and disclosure of employee health information to the minimum extent necessary to protect their privacy.

While some companies highlighted in the report, including IBM, Chrysler, and EDS, had good policies, too many did not. Their inaction underscores the need for meaningful federal privacy protections.

I am a lead sponsor of the Health Information Privacy Act (H.R. 1941), which would guarantee that patients control who has access to sensitive records and whether material is disclosed. Just as importantly, I am supporting two other bills that would safeguard both genetic information and financial records.

HIV/AIDS UPDATE

For nearly twenty years, I have been holding congressional hearings and working on legislation to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Although we are still waiting for a medical breakthrough that will cure this dreadful disease, we can take some consolation in the considerable progress already made.

In 1990, I was the lead sponsor of the Ryan White CARE Act, which was the first comprehensive law to provide care to Americans living with HIV/AIDS. Under this law, cities and states around our country currently receive more than \$1.5 billion to ensure that patients stay healthy and alive. It has provided money for pharmaceuticals that have kept people alive longer. But more still needs to be done.

Fortunately, last month the House passed H.R. 4807 ("The Ryan White CARE Act Amendments of 2000"), which strengthens the 1990 law to address the epidemic's most difficult challenges. I am proud to have authored this bill.

When enacted into law, H.R. 4807 will not only bring additional funding to Los Angeles and other cities in the greatest need of resources, it will also enhance the quality and scope of medical and social services. Until a cure is discovered, H.R. 4807 represents the best hope for hundreds of thousands of Americans living with HIV/AIDS around our country.

Ten Metropolitan Areas* Reporting Highest Number of AIDS Cases, 1981-1999

New York City 111,870

Los Angeles 39,863

San Francisco 26,715

Miami 22,283

Washington DC 20,623

Chicago 19,347

Houston 18,154

Philadelphia 16,970

Newark NJ 15,964

Atlanta 14,860

Source:
CDC (1999),
HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report,
11 (No. 1)

*With 500,000 or more population



Los Angeles Times

April 17, 2000

Bad Information Can Be Deadly

■ **Vaccines:** An unsubstantiated link to autism is hampering efforts to end childhood diseases.

By HENRY A. WAXMAN

First, do no harm.

That's the Hippocratic oath that doctors swear to uphold. And it's the rule that congressional committees should follow as well.

Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.), the chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, held a hearing this month to publicize his conviction that childhood vaccines cause autism. We heard heart-rending testimony from parents of autistic children who sincerely believe that vaccines caused their children's condition. And a few hand-picked researchers lent a scientific veneer by testifying that they believe vaccines may cause autism.

This is the kind of news that can alarm millions of families. That's why it's essential that parents know that the American Medical Assn., the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and virtually every medical expert around the world have reached a different conclusion: The scientific evidence does not support a causal association between vaccines and autism. Disregarding this evidence or overstating the dangers of childhood immunization runs the risk of needlessly scaring parents from vaccinating their children.

Failing to immunize our children exposes them to risks of serious illness, disability and death. Every year, 2.5 million children die

and 750,000 are crippled worldwide from childhood diseases. Once common and now rare in our country, rubella causes deafness, blindness and mental retardation. Measles, mistakenly viewed by some as an innocuous childhood illness, caused 11,000 hospitalizations and 120 deaths in our country during a 1989-91 epidemic. Today, a measles epidemic in Afghanistan has killed as many as 900 people, most of them children.

The dangers of a vaccine-autism scare are real. In 1998, British surgeon Andrew Wakefield published a preliminary report alleging that autism in 12 children was associated with the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine. The resulting hysteria quickly drove measles immunization rates in Britain below the level experts say is necessary to avoid an epidemic.

In Ireland, health officials report that a similar drop in MMR vaccinations has caused a more than tenfold increase in reported measles cases since last year. As one Irish official noted: "The end result will be that an epidemic of measles may come back unnecessarily, and some children will suffer permanent damage or even die."

At the congressional hearing, Burton invited Wakefield to present his latest unpublished findings linking autism in 26 children with the measles vaccine. Yet Wakefield has made similar announcements in the past, only to have them invalidated when his findings could not be duplicated.

Large-scale studies in Sweden, Finland and Britain have found no causal connection between vaccines and autism. The British government has reviewed and refuted the allegations, concluding most recently on April 3 that "there is no new evidence to suggest a

causal link between MMR vaccination and autism." Not only has the data not withstood independent scientific scrutiny, but the very premise of Wakefield's theory has been repudiated by most experts who have examined it.

Everyone agrees that more autism research is essential. We should learn what causes it, how to treat it and how to prevent it. Moreover, we should insist that vaccines be as safe as possible and continue to investigate any possible association between autism and vaccines. The CDC is studying more than 2,000 children to evaluate any association between autism and the MMR vaccine. The National Institutes of Health also is investigating vaccines and autism. And Congress is considering legislation to increase autism research.

In talking with the parents of autistic children, it's impossible not to be affected by the profound frustration and loss they feel. The parents who testified described how almost overnight they lost contact with the children they knew. They are right to demand that we pay more attention to this cruel condition.

Yet as we increase research, we must also make sure that every parent knows that the best available science does not support a link between vaccines and autism. Nothing could be more harmful than to mislead parents about these facts and to encourage an unwarranted mistrust of vaccines, leaving our children defenseless before terrible childhood diseases.

U.S. Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D-Los Angeles) is the senior Democrat on the House Government Reform Committee and was chairman of the health and the environment subcommittee from 1979-1994.



DISTRICT OFFICE PAGE

One of the most important functions of my district office is helping constituents who are having problems with a federal agency. My office's caseworkers interact on a daily basis with federal agencies to obtain reliable information for constituents of the 29th Congressional District and to ensure that concerns receive fair and timely review.

The following is a list of agencies most frequently contacted on behalf of constituents:

- ★ Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)
- ★ Social Security Administration (SSA)
- ★ Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- ★ United States Postal Service (USPS)
- ★ Medicare
- ★ Department of State/US Embassies in Foreign Nations
- ★ Small Business Administration
- ★ Veterans Administration

I cannot guarantee a favorable result to every inquiry, but I will always do my best to help.

CASEWORK SUCCESS STORIES

In 1999, my district office completed 772 cases affecting residents of the 29th Congressional District. Here are two examples of how my staff can help cut through red tape.

The Case of the Missing Medicare Benefits

In October 1999, a sixty-five-year-old constituent applied to the Social Security Administration (SSA) for Medicare benefits to begin in January 2000 when she retired. Due to an administrative error at the SSA, the constituent was told her benefits would not begin until June 2000. After she contacted my office, my staff worked with the SSA, and the error was corrected within a week.

The district office also provides additional constituent services. Please contact the office if you would like:

- ★ To request tickets to Washington, D.C. tour attractions
- ★ To purchase a flag that has flown over the U.S. Capitol
- ★ To express your opinion on federal legislation or federal issues
- ★ To learn about legislation I am working on in Washington, D.C.
- ★ To request a nomination to a United States military academy
- ★ To apply for an internship in my Washington or Los Angeles office



Congressman Waxman met with representatives of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation and some of his youngest constituents and pledged to continue to work hard for federal funding to combat juvenile diabetes.

The Case of the Lost INS File

A constituent applied for citizenship almost three years ago and passed an interview with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in 1999. He contacted my office many months later because the INS had not yet invited him to take his oath of office. My staff learned that the INS could not locate all of his files. After an intensive search by the INS, his files were found at a storage facility, and he was scheduled to take his oath. He recently became a United States citizen.



CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Americans strongly support changes in the way campaigns are financed. The real scandal in fundraising today isn't what's illegal, but what's legal and common. We must end the explosive growth of soft money and shed light on the strategies both national parties are using to get around campaign finance laws, such as the creation of non-profit groups to finance clearly partisan activities. And, we must stop the millions of dollars in secret contributions by so-called 527 organizations, which are exploiting a loophole in current law to keep their donors and the amount they are contributing

hidden from the public. Secret political contributions by moneyed special interests simply have no place in a democracy.

I have worked hard for the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act (H.R. 417), which would put an end to the abuses in the campaign finance system. We must reduce the role of money in the political process and restore the public's faith in its elected leadership. You can count on me to continue to do everything possible for comprehensive campaign finance reform.

DID YOU KNOW...

- The House Republican Leadership recently pushed through a bill that would prevent the Environmental Protection Agency from keeping arsenic out of our drinking water.
- And they passed a bill that would cut federal spending on the enforcement of nursing home standards.
- Then they passed a bill that would give a \$200 billion tax cut to the nation's wealthiest 400 families, and opposed a bill that would give all seniors prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

Hard to believe, but true. I voted against these provisions and will continue to work as hard as I can for policies that are in the best interest of our nation, not the special moneyed interests in Washington.



Congressman
Henry A. Waxman

Representative Waxman's District Office

8436 West Third Street, Suite 600
Los Angeles, California 90048
(323) 651-1040
fax (323) 655-0502

Visit our web site at
www.house.gov/waxman

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

M.C.
ECRWSS
Bulk Rate

Postal Customer
29th Congressional District
California

Printed on Recycled Paper with Soy Ink
This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense

media + 202-5577